

News from Ed Markey

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Markey Calls on Energy Department to "Stop Announcing" and "Start Implementing" Tough Security Improvements

Washington, D.C. - In response to the Department of Energy (DOE) announcement today that it is implementing new security initiatives for DOE nuclear sites, Rep. Markey issued the following statement:

"Today's announcement is disappointing, and it is my hope that the Department will stop thinking about taking action and start doing something. The Department of Energy has had more than 20 years of evidence that security at nuclear weapons sites is lacking, and more than two and a half years since the attacks of September 11 to contemplate the terrorist threat we face. The Secretary should be implementing bold changes that address these problems, instead of recycling initiatives made public years ago."

A close analysis of today's announcement reveals that the Department is largely recycling old initiatives it previously announced but never actually implemented -- rather than taking the type of bold measures needed to address the terrorist threat the U.S. now faces. For example:

A) The security guard force: Some of the private contractors who operate the security guard forces at DOE facilities have deployed guard forces that have been shown to be ineffective in force-on-force exercises, have been found to cheat on such exercises, and have been inadequately and inconsistently trained. While today's announcement calls for better training and more frequent force-on-force exercises, the Secretary has only announced that he will *consider* federalizing the guard force or creating a special guard force unit, instead of actually doing so.

B) Consolidation of nuclear materials: For years, experts have agreed that reducing the number of sites at which weapons-grade uranium and plutonium are stored would reduce the number of terrorist targets. By announcing the closure of TA-18 at Los Alamos, the Secretary has merely re-announced an effort started late in the Clinton Administration that the Bush DOE never implemented. Instead of deciding to move plutonium out of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, the Secretary has only announced he will think about doing so.

C) Disk-free Computer Environment: This initiative was also announced during the Clinton Administration, but apparently was never implemented.

D) Revising the Threat Assessment: According to the GAO, the Department's Design Basis Threat, the document that forms security regulations, is the first such document that essentially ignored the intelligence community's Postulated Threat which defined the numbers of attackers and other threats a nuclear weapons site needed to be protected against. As a result, DOE's post-9/11 security upgrades were not adequate. Had DOE done its job in the first place, no further revisions would be necessary.

Rep. Markey is a longstanding critic of lax DOE security measures and has pointed out problems with DOE's force-on-force security tests, the proliferation of nuclear materials, DOE mistreatment of whistleblowers, the inadequacy of the Design Basis Threat, and related matters. More information on Rep. Markey's activities in these areas can be found on the Web at <http://www.house.gov/markey>.